7. PROGRAM EVALUATION AND DATA ANALYTICS

The Administration is committed to using taxpayer dollars effectively and efficiently. Central to that commitment is a culture where agencies constantly (1) ask and answer questions that help them find, implement, spread, and sustain effective programs and practices, (2) identify and fix or eliminate ineffective programs and practices, (3) test promising programs and practices to see if they are effective and can be replicated, and (4) find lower cost ways to achieve positive impacts.

Both the "Evaluation" chapter in the Council of Economic Advisers 2014 Economic Report of the President and the *July 2013 "Next Steps in the Evidence and Innovation" memo*, jointly signed by the Office of Management and Budget, the Domestic Policy Council, the Office of Science and Technology Policy, and the Council of Economic Advisers, are strong signals of this Administration's widespread commitment to an evidence culture. The July 2013 memo encouraged a broad-based set of activities to better integrate evidence and rigorous evaluation in budget, management, and policy decisions, such as (1) making better use of already-collected data within government agencies; (2) promoting the use of high-quality, low-cost evaluations and rapid, iterative experimentation; (3) adopting more evidence-based structures for grant programs; and (4) building agency evaluation capacity and developing tools to better communicate what works. The memo built upon OMB's *May 2012 "Use of Evidence and Evaluation in the 2014 Budget"* memo, which stated that: "Where evidence is strong, we should act on it. Where evidence is suggestive, we should consider it. Where evidence is weak, we should build the knowledge to support better decisions in the future."

The best government programs use a broad range of analytical and management tools, which collectively comprise an "evidence infrastructure," to learn what works (and what doesn't) and improve results. In doing so, they support a culture of continuous feedback and improvement.

- It is a culture that keeps asking, "How can we do things better?" and approaches public policy and management challenges with humility about what we know or don't know about what works.
- It is a culture that values rapid, operationally-focused experiments that can quickly boost program efficiency, effectiveness and customer service, while at the same time equally valuing longer-term evaluations focused on more fundamental questions about program strategy.
- It is a culture that believes in using data to drive decision-making and is not satisfied with anecdotal evidence, since intuition about what works is often wrong.
- It is a culture where people are open to changing their minds and practices based upon evidence.
- It is a culture that is committed to publicly disseminating results from evaluations in an open and transparent manner, never suppressing evidence because it is politically inconvenient.
- It is a culture that sees improved program performance not as a destination that can be reached with the right tool or strategy, but as a process of ongoing program refinement, since new challenges will always arise and new knowledge and innovations can always bring better outcomes and efficiencies.
- It is a culture that sees program evaluation, statistical series, data analytics, and performance measurement as valuable, complementary tools, since each has different strengths.

Role of Program Evaluation

Among the most important analytical tools is program evaluation, which can produce direct evidence about program effectiveness and about the comparative effectiveness of different interventions. Rigorous impact evaluations, for example those with random assignment to treatment and control groups or those that use other strategies to isolate the causal effect of an intervention, can provide strong evidence about whether a program or intervention works and whether alternative practices might work better. For example, if a job training program has a high job placement rate, is it because it is effective or because it attracts those easiest to place in jobs? To answer this question, an evaluation could compare the employment of participants (i.e. those in the "treatment" group) to comparable individuals who did not participate in the program (i.e. the "control" group group) to isolate the effects of the training from other factors.

Evaluations can answer a wide range of important policy questions such as whether workers are safer in facilities that are inspected more frequently, whether one approach to turning around low-performing schools is more effective than another, whether outcomes for families are substantially improved in neighborhoods that receive intensive services, whether real-time pricing increases energy efficiency, and whether re-employment services are cost-effective.

This Administration strongly encourages appropriately rigorous evaluations to determine the impact of programs and practices on outcomes. In many policy debates, stakeholders come to the table with deep disagreements about the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of particular interventions. Evaluations that are sufficiently rigorous, relatively straightforward, free from political interference, and

produce actionable results are especially valuable in such circumstances. Historically, evaluations have generally not been built into program designs, and, once a program is up and running, identifying capacity and resources for evaluation can become more difficult. As described below, the Administration has made progress in embedding evaluation and evidence-based decision making directly into the design of new programs and will seek continued help from Congress and other stakeholders in doing so.

Other types of evaluation and data analytics can complement the evidence obtained from rigorous impact evaluations. For example, qualitative evidence can provide insight into how programs and practices can be implemented successfully, as well as insight into the underlying mechanisms driving evaluation results. Likewise, descriptive (rather than causal) analyses of administrative and survey data can reveal important patterns, which may directly inform decisions (such as how to better match recipients with appropriate services) or call attention to problems or promising practices that are worthy of additional scrutiny. Agencies also often use statistical time series data, such as those presented in Chapter 5, "Social Indicators," of this volume, to take a broad look at societal and economic trends over time. They also use this information to prioritize among policy interests and budgetary resources, to inform the design of policies, and to provide the benchmarks that are used to assess the effects of policy changes.

Role of Performance Measurement

Performance measurement is another critical analytical and management tool. By tracking inputs, outputs, outcomes, and measures of efficiency, programs can generate data that managers can then use to improve program performance. However, simply collecting performance data is unlikely to change anything by itself. Performance data become more useful when programs identify measurable goals and objectives, collect high-quality data and actively use them to ask and answer questions about what is being achieved, identify the most pressing program challenges, set goals, monitor results, celebrate progress, and adjust actions based on data-driven insights. This is the process of moving from performance measurement to performance management.

Performance measurement and program evaluation can be complementary tools, with each enhancing the value of the other. Performance measures are an essential resource for agencies to understand ongoing, real-time program performance so they can use that information to build a culture of continuous improvement, but they often do not tell us a lot about some key questions, such as how a program is affecting participants' long-term outcomes. Program evaluations provide context for the performance measures and help us better understand what can be learned from them. Too often, though, performance measurement and program evaluation are applied in isolation, with agency experts housed in separate units that work independently of each other. Bridging that divide will be important to take advantage of the synergy between the two tools.

An example of successful synergy comes from the Mentoring Children of Prisoners (MCP) program. The MCP program awards grants to faith-based and community organizations, along with tribes and state and local government entities, which provide children and youth of incarcerated parents with caring adult mentors. Although there were no rigorous impact evaluations of MCP, evidence from rigorous evaluations of other mentoring programs had shown that high-quality mentoring relationships lasting for at least 12 months can have positive impacts on youth, while relationships that last three months or less can be disruptive and potentially harmful. Meanwhile, the MCP program performance data suggested that fewer than half of program participants each year were in matches that lasted at least 12 months and a significant number of matches lasted less than three months. The evaluation evidence from other mentoring programs alone would not have helped policymakers make decisions about MCP, since what it showed was that mentoring programs could be either effective or ineffective depending on the length of the matches. Similarly, the performance measurement evidence alone might have led policymakers to conclude that matches were not lasting that long, but a short match is better than nothing. But, together, the evaluation and performance measurement evidence implied that the MCP program was unlikely to be effective unless it was able to produce longer matches. Largely on the basis of this evidence, The Department of Health and Human Services re-allocated funding for MCP to programs that were likely to be more effective.

Operationalizing an Evidence Infrastructure

Developing and supporting the use of evidence and evaluation in decision-making requires a coordinated effort between those charged with managing the operations of a program and those responsible for using data and evaluation to understand a program's effectiveness. It requires consistent messages from leaders at different levels of an agency—e.g., policy officials, program and performance managers, strategic planning and budget staff, evaluators, and statistical staff—to ensure that evidence is collected or built, analyzed, understood, and appropriately acted upon. No one individual in an agency has the knowledge and skills necessary to develop research designs that address actionable questions, understand different types of evidence, interpret evidence, and develop and implement effective, evidence-based practices. Rather, it takes an agency leadership team to oversee these efforts and to build and sustain a commitment to learning. It also takes a team of "implementers" at the program level to encourage the use of evidence and data so that it reaches program management.

Who is on these teams and how their work is divided depends upon the specific needs, personnel, and structure of a given agency. Success of these teams depends on including leadership at the agency and bureau level capable of supporting and requiring programs' use of data and evaluation in program operations. This leadership team

can make sure that the right questions are being asked about the program's effectiveness and its operations. Program managers are responsible for creating a culture where all operational decisions and internal and external communications of progress are based on evidence and data. To do so, the program managers need a team that includes data analysis and evaluation capabilities to provide the data and analysis to help inform the program's operational and policy decisions. These can include understanding the different types of evidence available and their implications for decisions, as well as identifying the need for new descriptive data and evaluation studies.

The Administration and the Congress have made progress in basing Federal decision-making on data and evidence, but more progress is needed. Chapter 6, "Delivering A High-Performance Government," in this volume discusses how Administration efforts are helping focus agencies on setting high-priority goals and measuring their progress on those goals.

Tiered-Evidence Grant Programs and Innovation Funds

Because many Federal dollars flow to States, localities, and other entities through competitive and formula grants, grant reforms are an important component of strengthening the use of evidence in government. By encouraging a greater share of grant funding to be spent on approaches with strong evidence of effectiveness and building more evaluation into grant-making, we keep learning more about what works.

Among the most exciting advancements in this area are so-called "tiered-evidence" or "innovation fund" grant designs. The Administration has adopted multi-tiered grant programs in the areas of K-12 education interventions, teenage pregnancy prevention, social innovations, voluntary home visitations for parents, workforce interventions, and international assistance efforts. In 2014, the Department of Education will also launch a new tiered evidence program, First in the World, focused on using and building evidence of effectiveness in postsecondary education. These initiatives are designed to focus money on practices with strong evidence but still allow for new innovation. For example, in a three-tiered grant model, grantees that implement practices with strong evidence qualify for the top, "scale up" tier and receive the most funding including for a large scale rigorous evaluation. Grantees that use approaches with more limited evidence qualify for the middle, "validation" tier and receive more limited funding along with support for a rigorous evaluation. Grantees using innovative but untested approaches may qualify for the third tier "proof of concept" and receive the least funding, but also support for evaluation.

A good example of this approach is the Department of Education's Investing in Innovation Fund (i3). The i3 fund invests in high-impact, potentially transformative education interventions, ranging from new ideas with significant potential to those with strong evidence of effectiveness that are ready to be scaled up. Applicants to i3 can apply for funding to develop, validate, or scale up their program. The Department issued regulations in 2013 that would allow any of its other competitive grant programs to adopt this tiered-evidence model.

With a multi-tiered grant structure, organizations understand that to be considered for funding they must provide credible evaluation results that show promise and/or be ready to subject their models to analysis. Equally important, tiered evidence models provide a built-in mechanism for scaling up interventions with proven high returns.

Pay for Success

The Administration is continuing to invest in Pay for Success to support evidence-based innovation at the State and local levels. In the Pay for Success model, philanthropic and other private investors provide up-front funding for preventive services and the government does not pay unless and until there are results. The Pay for Success model is particularly well-suited to the subset of cost-effective interventions that produce government savings, since those savings can be used to pay for results. For example the Department of Labor awarded nearly $24 million to the States of New York and Massachusetts for Pay for Success projects to increase employment and reduce recidivism among formerly incarcerated individuals. Funds will be paid out only after outcomes are achieved. In addition, the Department of Justice launched Pay for Success projects in which more effective prisoner re-entry interventions can reduce not just recidivism, but also the cost of the interventions, and a portion of those savings can be used to pay back the investors. The Administration is promoting the Pay for Success model in several other Federal programs, including housing, workforce, and education, and is re-proposing a $300 million fund in the Treasury to create incentives for States, localities and not-for-profits to invest in programs that will produce Federal savings alongside better outcomes in communities.

Examples of Evaluations and Innovative Pilots

The Administration supports evaluations with rigorous research designs that address questions critical to program design, and supports strengthening agency capacity to support such evaluations. The Budget supports new evaluations across the Federal Government to analyze program impacts, including how to structure student aid to increase college access for low-income students; how to strengthen the impact of Federal technical assistance to small businesses; and how to use increased local flexibility in housing assistance to increase employment and self-sufficiency.

For example, the Departments of Education, Labor, and Health and Human Services and the Social Security Administration have launched a joint initiative, PROMISE, to test interventions that improve outcomes for children with disabilities and their families, which may yield substantial savings through reduced long-term reliance on the Supplemental Security Income program and other public services. In addition, the Administration is proposing to restore demonstration authority for the Social Security Disability Insurance program, while also providing new authority for the Social Security

Administration and partner agencies to test early-intervention strategies that would help people with disabilities remain in the workforce.

The Department of Energy, in partnership with States and local utilities, has invested in evaluating the impact of time-varying pricing on consumer behavior. Experts have long suggested time-varying pricing as a way of increasing the efficiency of electricity use and reducing electricity demand, thereby allowing utilities to defer investments in expensive new power plants and reduce pollution. However, most electricity delivery systems have not invested in the in-home technologies necessary to allow residential consumers to respond to time-varying prices. In addition, regulators have been hesitant to approve varying rates, and private companies have been reluctant to invest in modernizing their systems without knowing whether time-varying pricing will significantly impact consumer behavior. While the Energy Department studies, which randomized residential consumers into a variety of time-varying pricing structures, are still ongoing, two utilities and their regulators have already decided to implement time-varying rates across their service territories based on the results observed to date.

In another example, the Partnership Fund for Program Integrity Innovation launched 11 pilots to test promising solutions developed collaboratively by Federal agencies, States, and other stakeholders to improve payment accuracy, improve administrative efficiency, and enhance service delivery in benefit programs that serve overlapping populations. For example, a pilot administered by the Department of Justice is helping state and local juvenile justice agencies generate cost-effectiveness scorecards for service providers, promoting research-informed tools to improve outcomes for all the youth in their care. Evaluation of these pilots will help determine which strategies lead to better results at lower cost, allowing Federal and State governments to identify those that warrant expansion.

Rigorous evaluation will also be a central component of the Administration's Performance Partnership pilots, which will enable leading edge States and localities to experiment with new approaches to assisting disconnected youth, by giving them flexibility to pool discretionary funds across several Federal programs serving similar populations and communities in exchange for greater accountability for results. The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2014 authorizes up to 10 State and local performance partnership pilots to improve outcomes for disconnected youth. Pilot projects will support innovative, efficient, outcome-focused strategies using blended funding from separate youth-serving programs in the Departments of Education, Labor, Health and Human Services, and the Corporation for National and Community Service. Authorization for up to 10 new pilots is proposed in the 2015 Budget.

Evaluation Capacity, Sharing Best Practices, and Administrative Data

Research, statistics and evaluation are part of any comprehensive effort to use data and evidence to serve the American people in more cost-effective ways. Funding for these areas should never be viewed as a luxury but rather as an essential element of running effective government programs. However, new funding is only part of the Administration's efforts to support evidence activities across the Federal Government. The Administration is also working to: (1) build agency capacity for a robust evaluation and data analytics infrastructure by supporting agencies in standing up central evaluation offices that lead to strong and coordinated evaluation efforts; (2) empower existing evaluation offices; (3) institutionalize forward-looking policies, such as annual strategic reviews of agency priority goals; and (4) hire evaluation and data analytics experts into key administrative positions.

The July 2013 memo described earlier inaugurated a series of OMB-hosted workshops to support evidence efforts in agencies. Those workshops began in the fall of 2013 and will continue into 2014. Topics include helping agencies (1) focus evaluation resources on the most important program and policy questions; (2) use administrative data sets from multiple programs and levels of government to answer important questions while protecting privacy; (3) conduct rigorous program evaluations and data analytics on a tight budget; (4) use existing authorities to turn traditional competitive grant programs into innovative, evidence-based grant programs; and (5) apply research findings from the social and behavioral sciences to test and implement low-cost approaches to improving program results. In addition, an inter-agency working group of evaluators across the Federal Government is sharing best practices, such as helping to spread effective procurement practices, developing common evidence standards, and better integrating evaluation and performance measurement efforts. The Performance Improvement Council also is playing an important role with the latter effort.

Another part of the evaluation and data analytics infrastructure is helping agencies make better use of "administrative data," i.e., data collected for the administration of a program. Administrative data, especially when linked across programs or to survey data, can sometimes make both performance measurement and rigorous program evaluations more informative and less costly, while also providing strong privacy protections. For example, data from an early childhood program linked to the data from juvenile justice systems or K-16 educational systems shed light on the long-term effects of interventions in ways that would be cost-prohibitive in a long-term survey follow-up. Linking records across programs also enables policymakers to better understand how families access combinations of government assistance programs, such as food assistance and unemployment insurance, during times of economic challenges. The Departments of Health and Human Services and Housing and Urban Development, for instance, are sharing data to analyze how housing interventions, including efforts to reduce homelessness, affect health care use and costs of residents. Also, the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development are streamlining reporting by homelessness programs to create a more comprehensive picture of homelessness trends and interventions.

Data linkage can be a powerful tool for improving agency management of programs —looking at available information to find patterns, relationships, anomalies, and other features to inform priority-setting, program design, and hypothesis formulation. Administrative data also can be used in conducting low-cost rigorous evaluations. This approach is discussed in the Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy's 2012 brief, *"Rigorous Program Evaluations on a Budget: How Low-Cost Randomized Controlled Trials Are Possible in Many Areas of Social Policy."* A number of States and localities, such as those participating in the *Actionable Intelligence for Social Policy Initiative*, are creating capacity to link data across multiple systems so that researchers and government decision-makers can work together to analyze problems. Their pioneering work, which provides strong safeguards to protect privacy, can help other States, localities, and Federal agencies harness data for learning and better decision-making.

Nonetheless, accessing administrative data for these statistical uses is challenging. For example, while some agencies have an established history of using administrative data for statistical and evaluation purposes, in many cases access to such data is not readily available due to real or perceived legal, policy, or operational barriers. In some cases, extensive negotiations with the agency responsible for the data are needed to gain access to the data for use in evaluation studies; sometimes the efforts are not successful even after months or years of negotiations.

To help address these barriers, OMB in February 2014 issued *"Guidance for Providing and Using Administrative Data for Statistical Purposes"* to assist both program and statistical agencies (and statistical components within agencies) in increasing the opportunities to use administrative data for statistical purposes, which includes evaluation. In part, this guidance requires government departments to engage both program and statistical agencies in identifying administrative datasets of potential value for statistical purposes; communicating the importance to staff of promoting the use of administrative data for statistical purposes; and identifying several datasets with the most value for statistical purposes but which are not currently being provided, along with descriptions of critical barriers that appear to preclude providing access for statistical purposes. The guidance also offers tools, developed under the auspices of the Federal Committee on Statistical Methodology, to help agencies understand relevant legal requirements, facilitate more efficient interagency agreements, and assess administrative data quality. Departments must also report to OMB on their efforts to encourage collaboration and increase access to administrative data for statistical purposes. In this way, OMB can continue to learn from and foster progress among agencies in their evidence-building efforts.

Social and Behavioral Sciences Team

Increasingly, agencies are using insights from behavioral science to implement low-cost evaluations that can be used to improve program design. Using randomized experiments or other rigorous evaluation designs, these studies examine aspects of program operations that can be re-designed to help people take better advantage of available programs and services. These studies have tested the impact of simplifying outreach and collection letters or highlighting the availability of student financial aid. Recently, the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy assembled a cross-agency team of behavioral science and evaluation experts, the U.S. Social and Behavioral Sciences Team, to help agencies identify promising opportunities for embedding behavioral insights into program designs and to provide the necessary technical tools to rigorously evaluate impact. Such low-cost, real-time experiments can help Federal programs operate more effectively and efficiently.

Common Evidence Standards and "What Works" Repositories

OMB and Federal agencies are working together to develop common standards and guidelines for research and evaluation, i.e. "common evidence standards." These common evidence standards should facilitate both production and use of reliable, rigorous evidence. Policymakers, program managers, and practitioners could use these common evidence standards to identify effective programs, improve programs, and encourage innovation in the development of new approaches. For example, the Department of Education and National Science Foundation issued *Common Guidelines for Education Research and Development* in 2013. These guidelines clarify how different types of studies contribute to the evidence base, including basic research and impact evaluations, and set expectations for the evidence that different types of studies should seek to generate. Other agencies such as the Department of Labor and components of the Department of Health and Human Services are using the same guidelines for their evaluation activities. Research experts from Federal agencies, States, and academia are working with the National Academy of Sciences on ways to build consensus on standards for benefit-cost analysis of preventive interventions for children, youth, and families. Those standards would help government compare the benefits and costs of multiple strategies focused on similar target populations and outcomes. Common research standards and evidence frameworks across agencies can facilitate evaluation contracting, information collection clearance, and the strengthening or creation of research clearinghouses and repositories about "what works." The repositories synthesize evaluation findings in ways that make research useful to decision-makers, researchers, and practitioners in the field. Furthermore, as Federal innovation funds and other programs provide financial incentives for using evidence, these repositories will continue to evolve. They can provide useful tools for understanding what interventions are ready for replication, expansion, and greater investment. Information in the repositories also indicates the implementation contexts of programs and strategies evaluated, and areas where more innovation or more evaluation is needed.

Acting on Evidence

The Administration is committed to producing more and better empirical evidence. The ultimate goal, however, is to use evidence to drive better outcomes. In a number of cases, the Administration has taken or is proposing to take evidence-driven approaches to scale, making programs more effective in achieving their goals. For example, based upon a strong body of evidence showing positive long-term effects on children and families, the 2015 Budget proposes to continue the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program in the Department of Health and Human Services and expand the availability of voluntary home visiting programs to reach additional families in need. The Administration is also investing in the Jobs-Plus program in the Department of Housing and Urban Development, because its combination of job training and financial incentives has been shown to boost annual incomes by $1,300, on average. And the Administration is proposing to provide those Unemployment Insurance beneficiaries most at risk of exhausting their benefits, as well as all recently separated service members, with reemployment and eligibility assessments and reemployment services, based on evidence that these services are effective in getting UI recipients back to work faster and in jobs with higher wages.

A particularly successful example of evidence-based policymaking is in the area of reducing homelessness. Although chronic homelessness was long considered an intractable problem, a broad body of research (including rigorous evaluations) has demonstrated that permanent supportive housing is effective at reducing chronic homelessness and is more effective than traditional approaches, such as transitional housing. By investing heavily in evidence-based approaches, the Administration has made significant progress toward the goal of ending homelessness among veterans, reducing the total number of homeless veterans by almost 18,000 since 2009. The Budget proposes to continue investments in supportive housing, keeping the Nation on track to meet the President's goal of changing veterans' homelessness by 2015.

Creating more of these success stories will require building more evidence of what works, but also more consistently acting on the evidence available. Part of doing both is to increase demand for data and evidence in Federal decision-making processes. One piece of this is the process of setting strategic objectives and high-priority performance goals then measuring progress towards meeting them, as described in Chapter 6, "Delivering A High-Performance Government," in this volume. The Administration's goal-setting and performance measurement process is enhancing the demand for reliable data, its analysis, and complementary evaluations, as leaders running frequent data-driven reviews to achieve progress on ambitious goals search for increasingly effective and efficient practices to speed progress toward the goals they have set. But more can be done.

Often the focus is on producing better evidence, but not on making that evidence useful for busy, non-technical decision-makers. Some policy areas lack rich evidence, but in areas with rich evidence decision-makers are not able to sort through the myriad of evaluation reports and analyses, especially when results point in different directions. There is a tremendous need for credible, systematic, and user-friendly analyses of which interventions have a high return and which ones do not. At the Federal level, work described above on common evidence standards and improving "what works" repositories, such as the Department of Education's *What Works Clearinghouse*, the Department of Justice's *CrimeSolutions.gov*, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's *National Registry of Evidenced-based Programs and Practices* (NREPP), and the Department of Labor's new Clearinghouse of Labor Evaluation and Research (CLEAR) are helpful steps towards making evidence more useful for decision-makers.

State, local, and tribal governments face a similar need to prioritize programs that achieve the best results. One particularly interesting model (that has played a role in shaping state legislative decisions) is the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP). The Institute provides a good example of how a centralized evaluation and research entity can conduct systematic reviews of existing evaluation research to identify policies, practices, and strategies that are most likely to give taxpayers a return on their investment. It was created by the Washington State legislature to carry out practical, nonpartisan research—at legislative direction—of importance to Washington State. The Institute has its own policy analysts and economists, specialists from universities, and consultants with whom it engages to conduct policy analysis. It conducts a systematic review of evidence and has a methodology for comparing the relative return-on-investment of alternative interventions. The Institute presents the results of its analysis in a straightforward, user-friendly manner that is accessible to politicians, policy-makers, and the public. Examples of the Institute's assessment of the evidence of options to improve statewide outcomes in a variety of areas, including child maltreatment, crime, and education can be found *at the Institute's website*. The Pew-MacArthur Results First initiative has partnered with over a dozen states to implement a benefit-cost model using the WSIPP methodology that helps States invest in evidence-based policies and programs, demonstrating a growing demand for this type of analysis among State governments.

The President has made it clear that policy decisions should be driven by evidence—evidence about what works and what does not, and evidence that identifies the greatest needs and opportunities to solve great challenges. By instilling a culture of learning into Federal programs, the Administration will build knowledge so that spending decisions more often yield the highest social returns on carefully targeted investments.